

Diocese of Rapid City Keeping God's Children Safe

A Safe Faith Environment Newsletter

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This month our "Safe Faith Environment" focus topic is Online Communications with our young people. Review the "10 Ways to Keep Your Child Safe Online;" how many have you implemented with your children? On page 2 we share with you what efforts our diocese is encouraging with our employees and volunteers that work with our young people are asked to follow in the using the Internet; please help in this effort as well! Finally, at the bottom of this page we are highlighting a new website from USCCB (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) with numerous ways to assist us all to use the internet safely. Please explore all it offers to you and your family!

10 WAYS TO KEEP YOUR CHILD SAFE ONLINE

1. Know **what sites** your child is visiting.
2. Know **who** your child is **communicating with**.
3. Keep **computer** in a **common area** of the home.
4. Approve **all information/photos/video** your child puts online.
5. Monitor your child's use of **Social Networking Sites**.
6. Teach your child: **Online** communications are **Not Private**.
7. **Learn** the technology your child is using.
8. **Install** blocking/monitoring software.
9. **Teach** your child **Cyber Etiquette**.
10. Help your child **Report Online Abuse**.
<http://www.cybertipline.com>

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Faith and Safety Technology Safety Through the Eyes of Faith

Calling all Parents and Adults!

There is a new website from USCCB for helping keep children and families safe online: <http://www.faithandsafety.org>. The website is a partnership with the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and it is designed to be a place where families learn to see technology through the eyes of faith and stay safe online. The site offers guidance how to use the Internet, cell phones and video games safely, as well as protecting children's privacy.

Jointly developed by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (GOA), this site is an attempt to give you some simple, straightforward advice and tools on how to navigate this digital world with your family. We don't expect you to read every page on the site. Each article and section has been designed to be a self-contained reference. However, even if you don't read anything else on the site, there are five things we want you to know. Please check out: <https://faithandsafety.org/at-least-read-this> to read this article and discover what the five things are!

**New
Website!**

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**USCCB Office of Child
and Youth Protection**
[www.usccb.org/
about/child and youth
protection/](http://www.usccb.org/about/child-and-youth-protection/)

**Diocese of Rapid City
Safe Environment
home page:**
[www.rapidcitydiocese
.org/WP/safe
environment home](http://www.rapidcitydiocese.org/WP/safe-environment-home)

Did you know...

*... there are 665
million daily active
users on Facebook?*

*Is your child one of
them?*

*Do you view their page
and discuss what you
see? Who else views
it?*

Online Communications with Youth: Do(s) and Don't(s)

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The internet can be a useful tool for communicating information —reminding youth of important deadlines and events — providing access to information about and assistance with assigned tasks, etc. As in any interactions with youth it is important to delineate appropriate boundaries. Follow these simple guidelines to set clear boundaries for your online communications - both for the safety of youth and for your own safety / avoidance of risk.

Don't send text messages or instant messages to youth.

Do use the Safe Environment Principle of "Safety in Numbers":

- Don't email individuals—send all communications to entire group.
- Forward / CC all communications to immediate supervisor.
- Use bulletin board format.
- Use List serve format.

Don't try to connect with youth through outside sites (e.g. chat rooms, myspace, facebook, etc.). Unless you are assigned to monitor youth internet usage don't enter youth sites — Stick to an established and devoted method of communication (batch email, bulletin board, list serve, etc.).

Do as you would in face to face contacts, avoid language that might be misinterpreted / misconstrued. This is especially important with online communications as there is no immediate feedback and no context (facial expression, body language, etc.) to assist understanding.

Don't over personalize greetings / salutations and closings.

For example:

- "God loves you." - may be appropriate
- "God loves you and so do I." - may be misinterpreted
- "Lots of love!" – is clearly inappropriate

Do be supportive, using descriptive praise when appropriate. **Don't** use flattery.

For example:

- "As a group you did a great job cleaning up the church hall..." versus
"You are the best group ever!"
- "I appreciated the time and effort all of you put into dressing formally for the event..."
not, "You looked HOT!"

Do remember— online communications are not private. When you put something out there you have no control over who it is sent to or how long it is kept.

- **Do** scrutinize your online communications with the same degree of attention you would give to a media interview or legal testimony.
- **Don't** post video and photographs of youth without careful consideration and parental consent.

Do follow the same code of conduct as you would for face to face interactions with youth:

Do:

- Treat everyone with respect, loyalty, patience, integrity, courtesy, dignity and consideration.
- Avoid situations where I am alone with children and/or youth .
- Use positive reinforcement rather than criticism, competition or comparison when working with youth.
- Report suspected abuse.
CyberTipline – <http://www.cybertipline.com>
Contact nearest Law Enforcement Office.

Don't:

- Use, possess or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while interacting with children / youth.
- Humiliate, ridicule, threaten or degrade children / youth.
- Communicate in a sexual or other inappropriate manner.
- Use any discipline that frightens or humiliates children / youth.
- Use profanity in the presence of children / youth.